ED 407 326 YOUNG AT ART: ARTISTS WORKING WITH YOUTH AT RISK.

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ABSTRACT

Like other states, Idaho faces increasing numbers of youth considered at risk for becoming a detriment to society. Some communities are looking to the arts as a way to help young people channel their energies positively. In 1993 and 1994, the Idaho Commission on the Arts wanted to test the idea that artists working with first-time juvenile offenders might be able to help them find their voice and connection to the community. Ten artists were chosen to conduct various kinds of community residencies working with small groups of students in classes, workshops, and public presentations. This document describes each artist's residency in brief. Concluding sections give guidelines and advice for designing and implementing similarly successful programs. (MM)

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ED 407 326

Young at Art

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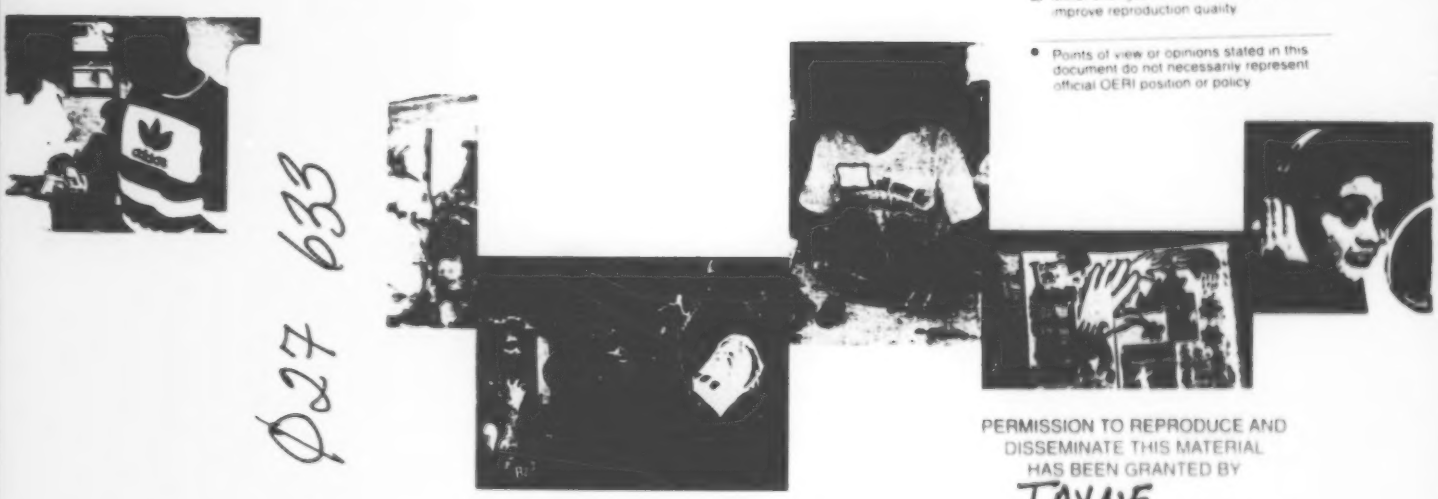

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ARTISTS WORKING WITH YOUTH AT RISK

IDAHO COMMISSION ON THE ARTS

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A Message from the Governor

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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PHILIP E. BATT
GOVERNOR

July 17, 1995

Each of us is an artist in some way. Whether our chosen forms are visual or musical, whether we perform alone or in groups, whether we stay with what is familiar or experiment with something new, the arts are an enduring expression of our humanity.

Now the Idaho Commission on the Arts has turned to the arts as a new way to strengthen families and improve chances for so-called "at-risk" youth. This booklet describes the results of experimental projects in which artists worked with juveniles who had committed their first status offenses, giving them a chance to explore their creative sides and to succeed in new and challenging ways.

This booklet shows how artists, social service agencies, alternative schools, and law enforcement officials can work together to intervene early in the lives of youngsters who stand at important crossroads in their lives. It is a "how-to" report in the broadest sense, showing what succeeded and what failed and offering advice on what to emphasize and what to avoid.

All of us have a stake in improving the lives of Idaho's juveniles. If first-time offenders learn to see themselves and their talents differently, and if the result is a diversion from on-going criminal activities, then the arts will once again help us fulfill our finest human potential.

Very truly yours,

Philip E. Batt

Philip E. Batt
Governor

About the Project

IN MANY COMMUNITIES, it wasn't long ago that important events were marked by the creation of art.

It might not have been called art, but it was. A baby was born, a song was sung. Harvests were etched in communities' memories by quilts, dances, jewelry, drama. All ages participated; everyone cheered.

Today, in many communities, making things doesn't get as much attention as breaking things. Kids, desperate for attention, get a rise from adults by expressing aggression, violence, destruction. Headlines proclaim rising rates of juvenile crime; in Boise last year, 56 percent of violent crimes were committed by people 18 and under. Such crimes signal problems that are complex, not easily solved. They involve breakdowns in families, shifting personal ethics and values, economic and educational challenges.

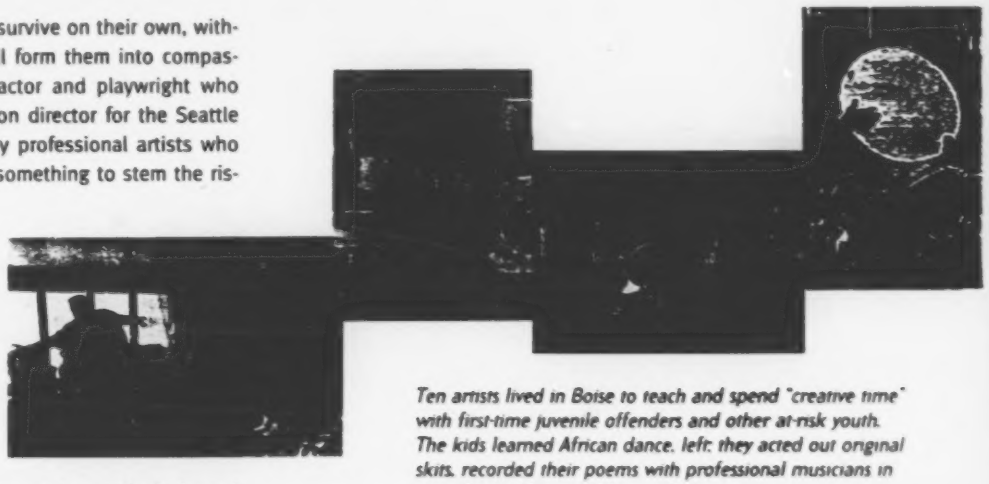
"Kids are too often being left to survive on their own, without the loving and nurturing that will form them into compassionate people," says Ted Sod, an actor and playwright who works with young people as education director for the Seattle Repertory Theatre. He is one of many professional artists who are working at least part-time to do something to stem the rising tide of youth hopelessness.

LIKE OTHER STATES, Idaho faces increasing numbers of youth considered at risk for becoming a detriment to society. In fact, all kids are at risk. Social certainties have crumbled, and in the rush to create community anew, many parents, teachers and youth workers are rediscovering an aspect of what always made people feel good about themselves: making things. Making things of beauty, of value, of truth. Making things that help us remember. Making things that help us forget.

Artists are experts at making things. Some communities are once again looking to the arts as a way to help young people channel their energy toward creativity, healing and expression.

In 1993 and 1994, the Idaho Commission on the Arts wanted to test the idea that artists working with first-time juvenile offenders might be able to help them find their voice, their connection to the community. A grant from the State and Regional Program of the National Endowment for the Arts helped create the Family Center Arts Project. The commission put out a limited call for artists who wanted to work with youth. They got 18 responses and, after a selection process, chose 10 artists to conduct various kinds of residencies — extended periods of time in the community, including classes, workshops and public presentations. Using media ranging from clay to poetry to computers, artists worked for concentrated periods with small groups of students, encouraging them to express themselves in positive and useful ways.

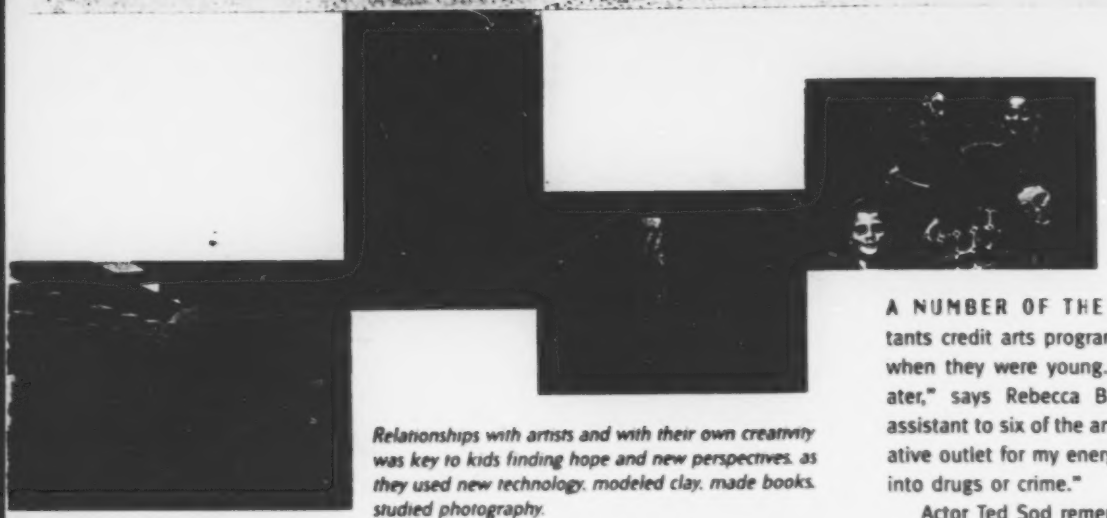
STATISTICS ON THE RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS of arts residencies, compared to other programs for at-risk youth, do not yet exist. But experts in criminology, such as Dr. Cliff Bryan of Idaho State University in Pocatello, say that what works best with at-risk kids are adults who are willing to listen, draw boundaries, and create a safe space within which kids can strive to achieve more than they thought they could. "If somebody else cares," he says, "kids will do well. Give them a chance to build something."



Ten artists lived in Boise to teach and spend "creative time" with first-time juvenile offenders and other at-risk youth. The kids learned African dance, left; they acted out original skits, recorded their poems with professional musicians in a studio, and learned "drum talk."

Detective Doug Borah of the Boise Police Department has found that arts can help change negative behaviors. He observes, "I have an office next to the drama department at one of the high schools, and we've all observed that high-risk kids make the best actors." The investment in this project of $6.40 per student/day is small compared with $125/day to put a kid in juvenile detention.

For this project, the commission sought out artists with experience in working with young people. Each artist brought a different style to his or her residency. (See reports on each artist's residency, pp. 3-12.) Likewise, the commission experimented with different ways of recruiting kids. The project, originally conceived at Boise State University as part of an action research study on status offenders, was called the Boise Family Center Project. But the BSU study referred fewer than half of the 216 participants because of differing student criteria and



Relationships with artists and with their own creativity was key to kids finding hope and new perspectives, as they used new technology, modeled clay, made books, studied photography.

scheduling difficulties. The commission supplemented classes with referrals from Ada County social workers, probation officers, school resource officers, and school principals. In addition, art classes were integrated into existing education, therapy, and recreation programs run by Booth Memorial Home (for teenage mothers), Syringa House (a shelter in Nampa for troubled teenage girls), and the Juvenile Justice Day Treatment Center.

IN THE END, a residency was more likely to be successful when the commission worked with an existing organization. The artist could then function as part of a team that included staff who worked with kids on an ongoing basis. The staff found new ideas for how to get through to tough kids, and it was easier logistically for the artist to get to all the kids in the same place at the same time.

Jayne Sorrels, an arts administrator on the staff of the Idaho Commission on the Arts, coordinated the project with keen attention to detail, forming personal relationships with many of the students, families and youth workers—and making the artists part of her own extended family while they were in Boise.

Artist assistants took attendance, handled paperwork, dealt with supplies and logistics, and generally helped the artist get down to the work of being with the kids. Sometimes that meant acting as disciplinarian, or taking a kid away for a "time out." Other times it meant being a participant, another role model.

Sorrels rented an apartment for the visiting artists in a quiet neighborhood of Boise, where they could create and reflect in peace. She asked artists to keep journals of their experiences.

Students and parents of youth workers were asked to evaluate what they learned and the impact on their lives of having an artist-in-residence work with them. Reactions were almost unanimously positive.

"At first, we expected dramatic transformations as a result of bringing artists into these kids' lives, but that was unrealistic," reports Jayne Sorrels. "We're only a small part of their lives. We offered the participants a break in their normal routine, usually fraught with one problem after another. We planted seeds—seeds that may grow incredibly one day."

A NUMBER OF THE ARTISTS and assistants credit arts programs with "saving" them when they were young. "I was saved by theater," says Rebecca Brizee, who served as assistant to six of the artists. "It gave me a creative outlet for my energies, instead of getting into drugs or crime."

Actor Ted Sod remembers a similar experience from his childhood. "When you're in a situation that is so horrific, counterproductive, you need something to pull you out so you don't manifest in destructive ways. What saved me as a child is that I retreated into my imagination. I was lucky enough to have this gift, this aspect of my soul, blossom. It's been a refuge for me ever since."

"Kids who get in trouble are not linear thinkers, generally," adds dancer Bobby Fouther. "Art can help them connect to the world in a meaningful way." But that usually doesn't happen right away. It takes time, attention, trust, coaxing, patience and hard work.

Idaho Commision on the Arts Executive Director Margot Knight cautions that "you must be willing to listen" to kids, and that "you might not like what you hear. Their lives have been troubled, and their artwork sometimes reflects that."

"The fact that there is an adult figure saying to these kids, 'Yes, you can do this — yes, you are smart' is the most valuable aspect of the program," Rebecca Brizee wrote in one of her evaluations.

The true results of the program may be hidden in the futures of the kids who got firsthand glimpses of their own creativity by working with artists who are healthy, positive role models. They learned new coping skills, saw ways around traditional teenage apathy and boredom, and experienced self-esteem and new self-worth as they created new art.

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES, each artist's residency is profiled in brief, showing what the artist, the commission, and the kids learned in the course of the project. Names of children have been changed to protect their privacy.

"We are a rose in the blooming and the artist is the rose caretaker that helps us bloom," said 15-year-old Maya after a two-week watercolor class. Though products were less important than process, kids did create beautiful art.

From Clay to Community

Artist: Cathy Sher, ceramic artist from Lava Hot Springs, Idaho

Concrete results

- Beautiful ceramic city
- New friendships
- Two-year grant for artist to work with inmates at Pocatello Women's Correctional Center

What they said

- "The class taught me self-respect and how to get along with others and respect for everyone." — Nancy, 12
- "Clay's more fun than getting into trouble." — Troy, 11

Number of Students

5 (plus 5 guests)
12 inmates from the Idaho State Correctional Institution

Process

Cathy Sher asked kids to brainstorm about what they liked and didn't like about their community. Then they created a community of the future. Each day, they named a mayor, a journalist (who took notes), and a town council responsible for education, parks and recreation, industry, and residential development. They met at the beginning of each session to discuss their community, and then fashioned it out of clay. Prison inmates, in a separate class, were asked to give "advice" to the kids in the form of sculpture, which became the city's public art. At the end, kids visited the jail and spoke with two inmates.

Products

A ceramic city of the future, with public art by inmates
Minutes of town council sessions

Parental involvement

Minimal, but one parent vowed to get some clay for his kids.

Take a tour of Jacksonville, a city of the future. This town, named after one of the 13-year-olds in the group, sports a Warp 3 airport, a Pork Park (in the shape of a pig) for barbecues, a massive mall with record stores and an "imagination station," individualized rapid transit, and lots of public art. A virtual reality center sits beside a pond with ducks. On the other side is an apartment building in the shape of a coffee cup.

What they learned

- Hand-building with clay, glazing, firing
- What it takes to plan and build community
- Team-building skills

Problems encountered

- The *Idaho Statesman* published an excellent article about the project but identified some of the youths as juvenile offenders, which was embarrassing for families.
- Three-hour classes were too long.
- Artist was not provided with adequate background information on students, including medical and behavioral information (e.g., on Attention Deficit Disorder).
- Miscommunication with supplier resulted in wrong materials.

ARTIST'S JOURNAL

"It's different from working in schools. Here, kids are more hesitant. They need prompting. It helps to touch. To look them in the eye...
The more parents think of them as kids on the edge, the easier it is for them to go over the edge."

Cathy Sher is a sculptor and fabric artist who has worked extensively as an artist-in-residence and arts education consultant.

'T For 2'

Artist: Linda Piper, Actress/storyteller from Albuquerque, New Mexico

Concrete results

- Students made powerful dramatic statements
- Kids, with guidance, became willing to take risks

What they said

"Linda created communication lines among herself and the kids and between the kids themselves. Her focus was not on an end result, a show, but on the process of working together, working hard — taking risks, observing, leading, following, speaking, listening— on creating pride and focus itself."
— Jeffrey Clark, artist assistant

"What I liked best was that she scolded me to do better."
— Jerry, 14

"We're not bad people. We just made bad choices," said inmates from Idaho State Correctional Institution in the play they performed for visiting students.

What they learned

- Drama, movement skills
- Improvisational skills
- Communication skills
- "I learned to be open and honest with myself about strengths and weaknesses." — Mary, 13

Advice

- It's important to conduct activities in "cool" community spaces if possible, not in schools.
- Snacks and breaks are important.

Problems encountered

- No storage space in YWCA; class space was small and didn't allow for the kind of noise this class generated.
- Logistics and security were very tricky when inmates and youth got together in the prison setting. Planning and communication nearly broke down.
- Transportation was a problem. Finally, the kinks got worked out and kids got to class on time.

Number of students

5 plus 10 inmates at Idaho State Correctional Institution

Products

Youth class developed a theatrical piece, *T for 2: Skits for the 90's*, which they performed at the state prison. They wrote in journals, played theater games, and did vocal and body exercises, sensory-awareness exercises, mime and improvisation. They also attended with their parents: a Native American dance, Downhouse Theatre, and *Man of La Mancha* at the Morrison Center. Prison inmates staged a play, *Choices*, in which they acted out their experiences as youth in trouble and offered advice to avoid prison.

Products

Performances, sets, journals, videotapes

Parental Involvement

Parents attended theatrical performances with students, and some went to the prison performance.

This poem was also adapted into a skit.

Colors

You told me to choose.
Yellow or pink?
I chose blue.
How was I to know
You hated Blue?

You asked my opinion.
Strawberry or Chocolate?
I chose Vanilla.
How was I to know
You hated white?

You wanted to meet my
best friend.
I brought her over.
You turned and walked.
How was I to know
You hated the color
Black?

– Toni, 13

"Chaotic harmony" was how artist assistant Jeffrey Clark described the two-hour class sessions. "Lots of work, little time, active, and loud," he said. "We learned to strike a balance between giving a kid too much and too little attention."

ARTIST'S JOURNAL:

"These students have found something that adds meaning to their life. To create an expressionist dance piece is unheard of— amazing!"

Linda Piper is an actress, storyteller, director and writer with extensive experience as a performer and arts educator.

A Journey A Vision

Artist: Linda Wolfe Printmaker from Pocatello, Idaho

Concrete results

- Students were proud of books
- Booth Memorial Home sought and received a grant to bring Linda back for a second residency

Number of students

15 at Lowell Elementary School
10-12 at Booth Memorial Home
3-12 at Hays Shelter Home
8 at Saturday workshop for first-time juvenile offenders, Boise State University

Process

Linda Wolfe taught basic printmaking, bookbinding and collage techniques. Then students put together personal books with the theme "A Journey—A Vision." Each book contained six theme-based pages: a window to symbolize the vision from inside; balance (are you being true to who you are?); seeds of growth (taking care of your health, tending and planning your life); a letter to someone you love or with whom you need to make amends; where you want to go and how you feel about your future; and how you can make a difference. Linda Wolfe gave each child personal attention and encouragement as she led them through the process.

Products

Books, posters, prints

Parental involvement

Only for final session

"In spite of age differences, physical conditions, and behavior problems, everyone finished a book. The books brought out a very positive approach to thought and action in everyday life," says Linda Wolfe about the kids' work. "Constant one-on-one communication inspired self-confidence and personal success."

Advice

- Space and set-up for artist-child interaction is important; kids work better in a more confined space.
- Kids should be better grouped; first-time offenders don't mix well with youth who are at risk for becoming offenders.
- Classes of 10 are ideal for one-on-one contact.
- One and a half hours is the best class length.

Problems encountered

- Cafeteria space was too large.
- Kids of varying ages don't always work well together.
- Artist assistant not clear about role, working with the population, or the paperwork requirements.
- Behavioral problems interfered with learning; drugs, depression, and Attention Deficit Disorder were in evidence.

Linda Wolfe is a printmaker and visual artist who conducts residencies around the state of Idaho through the Arts Education Program of the Idaho Commission on the Arts.

Drum Talk

Artist: George Grant, Percussionist from Salt Lake City, Utah

Concrete results

- School assembly gave lots of kids exposure to art form
- Rhythmic and drumming skills were exhibited at final performances
- Kids with Attention Deficit Disorder were able to focus, listen, and participate effectively

Number of students

4 at Lowell Elementary School
5 at Fort Boise Alternative School
30 at Saturday workshop, Boise Family Center Project, Boise State University
15 social work graduate students for drumming/listening workshop

Process

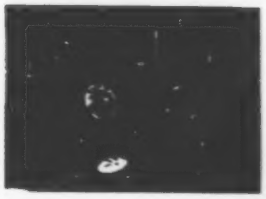
Through imitation, kids learned to listen, imagine, and respond. George Grant had a very structured curriculum, including drills to learn basic musical and rhythmic concepts, but he adapted it to the needs of specific kids. They vocalized. They listened and played blindfolded. They drew symbols representing sounds. Finally, they improvised together with drums and Tibetan bells.

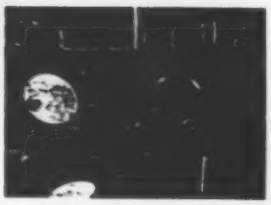
Products

Performances, videotapes of drumming sessions

Parental Involvement

Minimal; a few attended the introductory session or came to observe class.





Video images of drumming sessions show kids getting caught up in rhythms. A highlight was when kids chanted harmonic tones and surprised themselves with their beauty and power.

What they learned

- Drumming and listening skills
- Subtleties of nonverbal communication

Advice

- Transformation requires a long-term commitment.
- Clear rules and discipline are important; lip service isn't enough.
- It's important to communicate program goals to parents at the outset.

Problems encountered

- Classes were smaller than ideal.
- Publicity didn't attract kids as well as demonstrations did.
- Two girls dropped out because the class was otherwise all boys.
- Parents' presence was counterproductive in some cases.
- Kids clowned around a lot.
- Transportation problems were distracting and time-consuming.

ARTIST'S JOURNAL

"I really think the key is to get to kids when they're younger, and use art programs with them and their parents to improve communication...

These kids don't really want to learn drills. They just want to jam. That's o.k.—I'll jam with them. That's one way to learn, by osmosis.

I'm getting a lot done here on my own work—more than in most residencies. I have time to practice, edit tapes, edit my book, go to educational meetings. But I don't think there's enough time with the kids."

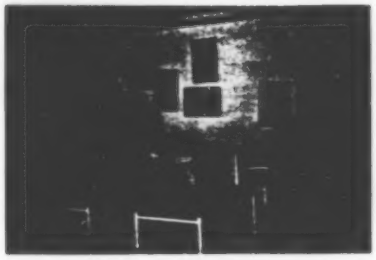
George Grant is a professional percussionist who focuses on teaching hand drums and improvisation techniques. He has taught workshops for all ages and abilities.

Watercolors in Bloom

Artist: Kathy Byron, Watercolorist from Boise, Idaho

Concrete results

- Portfolios of original watercolors by each student
- Matted watercolors exhibited in airport display
- Increased self-esteem, pride, and ability to stay on task



Number of students

8 at Boise State University
11 at Booth Memorial School

Process

Kathy Byron used Discipline-Based Art Education techniques, which included art production, history, aesthetics, and criticism. She showed slides of her work, and students learned to critique famous paintings. They studied "warm" colors, "cool" colors, tints, complementary colors, and geometric shapes. They developed portfolios of their own, with paintings completed at each class session. A public radio reporter covered the residency, interviewing the kids and making them feel even more accomplished.

Products

Watercolor portfolios

Parental involvement

Several attended the final exhibition at Boise State University. One parent volunteered to take photographs.

What they learned

- Self-confidence
- Critical thinking about their own and others' paintings
- How to create a trusting, respectful environment

Problems encountered

- Artist had to spend too much time as disciplinarian.
- Two-week residency was too short.
- One individual negatively affected the dynamics of the entire class.

"It was amazing to see the increase in self-confidence and their willingness to take more risks with their work," says artist Kathy Byron.

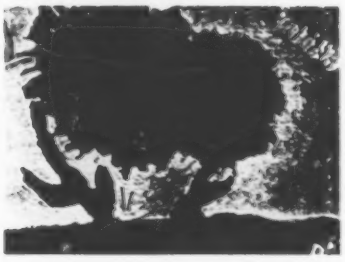
ARTIST'S JOURNAL:

"I got there, and some of the girls were already painting!

I often wavered between hopelessness for these students' futures and inspiration at working with such exceptional children...

Usually, George's work was brightly colored and dynamic. This particular day George had troubles at school. He was teasing other students, boisterous and uncooperative. The other students painted sunflowers, using bright yellows and oranges. George made his dark brown and black. I think George chose this painting [to display in the final exhibit] because he identified with what it represented for him and how he views himself."

Kathy Byron is a visual artist who uses painting as her primary medium. As an art educator, she combines her love of art and children.



Playwriting

Artist: Ted Sod Playwright/actor from Seattle, Washington

Concrete results

- Students improved techniques of dialogue, drama, creative expression
- Students learned that their life stories are interesting enough to become plays and to share with others
- Syringa House staff reported clearer self-expression and candor in girls' journals

What they said

- "The class helped me find a new me in my imagination." — Melissa, 16
- "Ted helped me recognize what I want to do with my life." — Teri, 15

What they learned

- How to manage conflicts in peaceful ways
- How to overcome stereotypes through experience and careful communication
- "It really helped me to express my feelings. I felt better after each time I wrote a play." — Toby, 15
- "I learned I had a personality, and I like it." — Mimi, 11

Problems encountered

- There were too few students in one class for an effective group dynamic.
- Transportation problems made kids late, and the class suffered.
- Kids brought vivid stereotypes into class.
- Group-home staff pulled kids out for therapy sessions, which created disruptions.

Number of students:

5 at Boise State University
12 at Syringa House, Nampa

Process

Ted Sod used various techniques in this two-week residency to introduce students to the elements of a play: monologue, dialogue, characters, plot, action, conflict, resolution. In an improvised talk-show format, students role-played the subjects of Diane Arbus' photographs. He and students read plays, including those written by other youth. They wrote monologues, dialogues, and short plays. They talked about issues in their lives, and they imagined other worlds. They attended a play in the community, a first-time experience for many.

Products

Plays, journals, videotapes

Video clips show kids using a talk-show format, at left, to "become" characters in Diane Arbus photographs.

"The arts make a game out of it. They make it fun to explore yourself and express your talents," explains Ted Sod. "The imagination is something we have to encourage, develop, nurture, tease. That is what these art forms do."

ARTIST'S JOURNAL:

"What is the overall goal of the project, to raise self-esteem or to introduce art forms? It should be fun enough to engage the kid. Self-esteem should be first...

I sometimes question how this work really...makes a difference in their daily lives. Perhaps I'm being cynical, but I'm not convinced they can appreciate the value of artistically dealing with their own stories...

Criminal and creative energy are remarkably the same. If you're not creating an atmosphere for creative expression, you're creating a criminal. Does punishment lead to better citizens? Punishment leads to resentful, bitter behavior...Our challenge is to keep giving them information about positive outlets and hope for the payoff in their work."

Ted Sod is an actor and playwright who directs the education and outreach programs of the Seattle Repertory Theatre. His plays have been produced by theaters across the country.

Introduction to African Dance & Culture

Artist: Bobby Fouther Choreographer from Portland, Oregon

Concrete results

- Kids took risks, tried new art form in public
- Students made a video presentation of dance and art depicting African culture
- The groups cooked African dinners at the artist's apartment and the group home
- Staff and students took class together as peers and learned new ways to relate

Number of students

5 at Juvenile Justice Day Treatment Center
12 at Syringa House

Process

Bobby Fouther led students and staff members in dance stretches, which helped them get into a different mood and creative space. Then he used various techniques to immerse them in African culture. He taught dances, played music, made costumes, cooked food, made posters, showed videos, and discussed community. Some class sessions were held in a performing arts academy, others at a group home and community center. One group produced a videotape; another performed at a nursing home.

Products

Dances, costumes, posters, videotapes, performance at nursing home

"Whatever's going on in your life, leave it at the door when you come in. Breathe in through your nose, out through your mouth." Bobby Fouther taught various dance stretches and steps. "Clear?" Bobby asked. "Clear!" students responded.

What they learned

- How to deal with individual and group problems when they come up instead of letting them fester for days, weeks, months or years
- How to be patient with self and others
- How to build community
- How to understand different cultures

Problems encountered

- Cash was stolen (and returned) from a staff person's purse.
- One student ran away but was quickly found.
- Students in the group home didn't like it when sessions went overtime; they were used to structured time.
- There was no adequate space for storage of art supplies and projects.
- Attendance was inconsistent.

Final performance by the Syringa House residents tickled residents at a local nursing home. "It was an emotional experience," says Joby, 14. "It was a success because they transcended their anxieties, fears, and issues, took a final bow, and socialized with residents," says Fouther.

ARTIST'S JOURNAL

"I have a sense that these kids are relying on professionals for the kinds of attention they didn't get at home.

Kids can't be 'throwaways' if we're all in one village.

The process is as important as the end product. In working with an artist, this is a basic approach that is different yet complementary to existing therapeutic models. How flexible is the staff and structure with new ideas, approaches and perspectives? Is the existing approach based on authoritarian control or on developing responsibility and empowerment?"

Bobby Fouther is an interdisciplinary artist who has produced, directed, performed, exhibited and taught. His dance career focuses on African and African American movement.

Introduction to Photography

Artist: Morrie Camhi Photographer from Petaluma, California

Concrete results

- Improved skills in photography and visual literacy
- Field trips to local sites and darkrooms
- Ability to "speak" in images about difficult issues
- Photos displayed in exhibit at Boise Airport

What they said

- "[As a result of this class] I'll think about what I'm going to do before doing it." —Trevor, 11
- "I learned I actually like taking pictures!" — Tom, 15

What they learned

- How to look at things with a photographer's eye for color, shadow, texture
- How to tell a story with photographs
- How to learn from looking at pictures

Problems encountered

- Two-week residency was too short.
- Donated cameras didn't work properly.
- Age levels were too disparate; artist wasn't prepared for younger kids.
- Attendance was inconsistent.

Number of students

6 at Fort Boise Art Center
5-7 at Juvenile Justice Day Treatment Center

Process

Morrie Camhi showed slides, books and photographs to illustrate how people use photography to reflect their own experience. He taught about how to use cameras and load and unload film, as well as about lighting, composition, and color. Students took photos and made books, "novellas" with commentary. They visited commercial photographers' studios and galleries and visited the artist's exhibit "The Prison Experience" at the Idaho Historical Society's Old Penitentiary Museum.

Products

Photo books

Working closely with photographer Morrie Camhi, students created images, such as the one below, and assembled them into books.

ARTIST'S JOURNAL

"We talk about visual communication, and Jerry has his arms folded tight against his chest. He says it only means he is relaxing. But I point to Fred, who is plopped over his chair: that is relaxing! I offer the explanation that I am on trial with him and he is daring me to be interesting and involve him. Jerry smiles broadly, and it's obvious my guess is quite close to the mark. Jerry is attentive and involved from that point on...

Ricardo wants to photograph his dad—but he won't see his father till after our class. We discuss (without using the words) the metaphor and simile and how things can stand for his father, how we might feel his phantom presence. Ricardo gets the point...

Leonard tells me of his beatings at his dad's hand and of lesser beatings and guilt from his mother. His project deals with his sense of abandonment. Anna photographs memorials, dealing with death in a tangent form. Joe says he's photographed himself mostly, and I advise him to look closely and tell us what he sees..."

Morrie Camhi refers to himself as a humanist photographer. He has published photographic series documenting farmworkers, Mexican Americans, Greek Jews, and prisoners.

Finding Voice in the Storm

Artist: Charlie Murphy Singer/songwriter from Seattle, Washington

Concrete results

- Student recordings of individual and group poems read over musical backing
- A sense of accomplishment on the part of most students: "I never knew I could do this!"
- Improved journals and therapy sessions
- A grant for Syringa House to bring artist back for summer songwriting/ camping residency

Number of students

5 at Juvenile Justice Day Treatment Center
9 at Syringa House

Process

Charlie Murphy focused on storytelling and self-expression through music and the written word. He talked a lot about his own creative process, demonstrating how a song can spring from a phrase or an image on television. Students shared their favorite music and kept journals. They wrote poems together and individually. They experimented with artistic visions and communication games. At the end, they recorded their work in a professional studio. Some students attended a dance performance by Urban Bush Women and got to meet them backstage.

Products

Cassette recordings with student-designed covers, journals filled with phrases, drawings, visions, and poetic images

Charlie Murphy told kids he really wanted to be with them, hear their voices: "You may be saying, 'I don't want to keep a songwriting journal. I can't write a song.' I want to ask you to suspend disbelief. Hang with me."

What they learned

- How to see the way songs come from experience and imagination
- How to use popular music to communicate
- How to generate creative language together

Advice

- Popular music is a great vehicle to get kids' attention: "It's where they live."
- It's important to make each session somewhat freestanding, because of fluctuating attendance.
- Listening, and being in the moment, are critical.

Problems encountered

- Attendance was inconsistent, because of court and legal problems.
- Mixed-sex group was sometimes distracted.
- Some students were sad and felt let down when the artist left.

The recording session was a major breakthrough for students who never imagined they could make a professional recording.

ARTIST'S JOURNAL

"Each person possesses creativity, no matter where they may be on the creative continuum. Each person in the group is capable of becoming more creative and, by definition, more empowered.

We experimented with listening to...compositions by a variety of artists I thought the members would be unfamiliar with and also enjoy. They were asked to respond to the new sounds and words with writing of their own...One group member, in response to hearing a world-beat ballad on the recording *Deep Forest*, wrote a piece which involved her and her mother in a traditional blanket-toss ceremony."

Charlie Murphy is singer/songwriter for the Seattle band Rumors of the Big Wave. He works with youth and youth workers as cultural coordinator of the YMCA's Earth Service Corps on the themes of creativity, self-expression, ritual, and arts activism.

"This poem is about what I wish would happen":

My mom and Diva
I don't know why
At a place where
the whole town gathers
Everyone is getting ready
for the blanket toss
My mom is happy
She's not drinking
She is calling out my name
She wants me there
I can hardly see her
I think she's holding out her arms
She is walking me to the blanket toss
I join in with everyone
The men are all around us with their drums
My mom is talking to me:
Dawn, please don't ever go away again.
–Dawn, 15

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Hypermedia: An Interactive Media Project

Artist: Jay Salinas, sculptor and youth worker from Ferrestone, Wisconsin

Concrete results

- Boise kids made connections with Chicago kids, using new technology
- Kids discovered new aspects of their creativity

What they said

- "I'm more creative than I thought." — Bo, 13
- "People across the U.S. are the same as us." — Laura, 16
- "I learned how big my boundaries were." — Abigail, 15
- "I learned other ways of showing (anger) rather than fighting." — Jose, 14

Number of students

7 at Fort Boise Community Center (including Idaho Youth Ranch youngsters)
9 at Syringa House
6 at Marwen Foundation in Chicago

Process

Jay Salinas asked students to look and create various means of expression through 'zines, drawing, writing, photography, collage. They communicated with a similar group of Chicago youth via fax, phone, teleconference, and computer. Among the topics were music, fashion, leisure activities, popular culture, gangs, violence and relationships.

Products

Notebooks containing creative artwork, communiqués to and from Chicago

Students made collages from magazines, above, and experimented with computer communication, below.

Letter written by Beth, 15, and faxed to Chicago:

Please Hear What I'm Not Saying

Don't be fooled by me.
Don't be fooled by the face I wear.
For I wear a mask. I wear a thousand masks. I'm afraid to take them off, none of them are me.
Pretending is second nature to me. I give you the impression that I am secure, that all is calm, that confidence is my name and coolness my game, and that I need no one. DON'T believe me. My surface may be smooth, but that is a mask. Beneath it lies the real me, in confusion and fear, in aloneness, but I hide this. I don't want anyone to know this. That's why I create a nonchalant, sophisticated mask, to hide me from the glance that knows. But such a glance is my only salvation. I know this is the only thing that can assure me of what I can't assure myself, that I'm really worth something. But I don't tell you this. I don't dare. I'm afraid. I'm afraid that your glance will not be followed by love. I'm afraid you will think less of me, that you'll laugh. Your laugh would kill me. Deep down I'm afraid I'm nothing and you will see this and reject me. My life is a front. I chatter with you about everything that is nothing and nothing of what's everything. So when I'm doin' my routine, try to hear what I'm not saying. I'd really like to be genuine and ME but I can't let myself get hurt.
Who am I, you may wonder?
I am every woman you meet.
I am every man you meet.

What they learned

- How to use communications technology: audio and video recorders, copy and fax machines, computers, speakerphones
- How to recognize commonality of interests among kids in a big city

Problems encountered

- Chicago teens didn't buy in or weren't as enthusiastic as expected.
- Confusion about exact goals made it difficult for kids at first.

Kinko's witnessed new uses for copy machines as kids prepared to fax images of themselves, along with poems and artwork, to other teens in Chicago.

Jay Salinas is an artist/educator/builder who has moved to rural Wisconsin from Chicago in order to live responsibly, creatively, and independently. He has developed a sculpture program for underserved Chicago high school students.

What We've Learned

DURING THE 10 RESIDENCIES, the Idaho Commission on the Arts had opportunities to learn a lot about what works and doesn't work in connecting artists with youth in high-risk environments. Here are some general conclusions:

1. Choose professional artists who demonstrate a high level of artistic quality, who have experience teaching their art, and whose skills lend themselves to working with at-risk youth. Choose people who exhibit warmth, sensitivity, flexibility, responsibility, and a clear sense of boundaries.

- Ask for a resumé, educational experience, work samples, a description of what they propose to do, and references.
- Use a panel of experienced people (artist/educators, arts administrators, a group of peers) to make the selection.
- Conduct face-to-face interviews whenever possible. Watch for listening skills.

2. Think long-term. Residencies could be more effective, in general, if they lasted three months or more. But even for short-term residencies, think of ways to keep students engaged. (Morrie Camhi suggests commissioning artists to respond when students write follow-up letters.)

In order to build long-term support for artist residencies, try doing the following things:

- Involve partners with common goals who can provide funds, space, transportation, food, or supplies.
- Engage the artist in community events.
- Encourage publicity and recognition whenever possible.

3. Fit the artist to the kids. Choose an artist, or artistic discipline, that is most likely to be successful with the particular kids you're looking to serve. Make it culturally relevant—something or someone that will address them directly.

Performing arts seem to engage the whole student more fully than visual arts. Yet miracles can happen with visual arts, too. Introspective and solitary activities (such as working with clay, sculpture, and painting) can help kids be more comfortable with themselves and can serve as gateways to other, more public, forms of creative expression. The performing arts are good for team building and for helping kids move outside themselves.

The more young people themselves can be involved in the design, the more ownership they'll take, and the more it will stimulate self-motivation in the future.

4. Promote the program. If others in the community are aware of what you're doing, they will often donate supplies or space or help cut costs. Public exhibits or performances can make other kids aware of the program, generate interest, and connect kids to the community.

The artists themselves are the best "draw" for the program, so take a drummer to a community meeting. Target parents, school counselors, and others who are likely to help identify the youth who could most benefit.

5. Inform parents. It helps to introduce the concept of the residency to parents. Particularly with younger children, parents' involvement can be an important ingredient in keeping the residency potent long after the artist is gone.

continued next page

Important Functions

Local groups may not have the resources to hire people for these positions, but residencies will be more successful if these roles are filled.

Project Director

The project director's role is twofold. The director holds the vision for the entire project and must implement it through careful management of systems and procedures for the various components of the project (registration, documentation, evaluation, staff communication, promotion, and so on). The project director works with the public—community agencies, schools, parents, press—in a variety of ways and needs strong skills in communication, both written and verbal.

Artist Assistant

The artist assistant handles the day-to-day logistical details of an artist's residency, including transportation, snacks, attendance, classroom paperwork, gathering materials/supplies, and assisting the artist with students. Therefore, it is essential that this person have a real knack for details and follow-through. It is important that this person have a helpful, service-oriented attitude and understand that the job is primarily to support the artist. If the assistant can manage the daily details successfully, it will free up the artist to focus on art—and on relating to the kids.

With older adolescents, it's sometimes best not to involve parents at all because students may feel uncomfortable expressing themselves.

In Boise, the most successful parent involvement occurred when parents and students viewed three professional theater performances together. After many parents failed to attend sessions they had been invited to, we decided communication was more important than attendance, and so the artist assistant gave parents an introduction to the artist and the residency goals over the telephone.

If you want more parent involvement, plan for it. Schedule parent evenings in advance, give them plenty of notice, and make follow-up reminder calls. You might even ask parents to help out in specific ways, such as by donating snacks, taking photos, or carpooling.

6. Work with referring agencies. Counselors and probation officers proved most useful in determining which students were most appropriate for the Boise project. Be sure that artists and staff talk regularly, both before and during the residency, so that goals and procedures are mutually understood.

Kids often need support from adults in a number of directions. Artists can often provide a different perspective on youth problems, both for youth and for adult staff.

7. Communicate. The project's success depends on effective communication between the artist and project staff, kids and parents, and between artist and assistant. It helps to prepare artists in advance with information about your community. Plan regular meetings:

- Hold one meeting upon the artist's arrival, for housing, community orientation, and last-minute scheduling information. Present the artist with a schedule and addresses and phone numbers of the project staff and youth workers involved in the project.
- Project meeting #1 with the director and the assistant helps fine-tune such details as student registration, general background on students, supplies/materials, week-one schedule, transportation arrangements, documentation, special events, and so on.
- Staff meetings at the end of each week allow for important reviews of activities, evaluation of successes and areas for improvement, and discussion of the following week's agenda.
- There should be phone communication almost daily among coordinator, artist and assistant.
- A final project meeting should by held on the last day or the day after the residency, to wrap it all up, discuss positives and negatives, and bring closure to an intensive month-long experience.

8. Pay attention to details. Plan ahead for snacks, transportation to classes and home, medical issues/medication, release forms for publicity, registration procedures, documentation, evaluation. Even with the best of planning, you will have to improvise.

9. Think about the best facility. Kids seem to respond best to artists outside school settings. School rules sometimes get in the artists' way, too (e.g., "Only one kid out of the room at a time").

10. Remember, the process is more important than the product. Kids don't always turn out museum-quality work. Sometimes they stop in the middle of a dance. But the fact that they have the guts to do it at all is what's important. Celebrate victories with them, no matter how small.

Advice to Artists: Elements of a Successful Class

1. Set clear ground rules.
- Let students participate in setting them (they often set stricter guidelines than adults would): no violence, no name-calling, respect for self and others.
- Be clear about consequences.
- Structure is important.

2. Establish good rapport between artist and students.
- Grab their attention fast. Prove your ability to relate, early on. Let them know your expectations, what they'll be doing.
- Make eye contact. Let them know you care, engaging them immediately.
- Light a fire. Enthusiasm is infectious.
- Keep things moving. Pay attention to the energy in the room.

3. Set a time frame that keeps them wanting more.
- An hour and a half, with a 10-minute break is good for starters. Once kids get into their projects, they can lose track of time.
- Food is a good equalizer and incentive, best used during the breaks. (As playwright Ted Sod observes, "Food is love.")

4. Keep class size appropriate to the art form.
- Have 10 or fewer for writing or visual arts. Performing arts need 7–10.

5. Be fully aware of students and their issues.
- Be clear about medications, phobias, particular problems.
- Discuss these in advance with parents, youth workers.
- Don't let kids' normal apathy and pessimism stop you from pushing.

6. Artists recognize that art form is secondary to relationship between artist and student.

Designing Art Programs for At-Risk Youth

YOU'VE DECIDED you want to set up a program to connect artists with young people in your community. Here's a checklist of what you need to consider.

Laying the Groundwork

- ☐ **Planning/Steering Committee.** Who will be the key players in your project (e.g., educators, juvenile workers, police, arts supporters, parents)? How can you involve them on the ground floor?

- ☐ **Personal/Agency Goals and Motivation.** Why do you and your agency want to do this work with youth? What do you want to accomplish on a personal level? What are your belief systems regarding your intended audience? How does it fit your organization's mission? capacity? resources?

- ☐ **Project Goals/Objectives.** What needs or problems are you trying to address? What are your goals and objectives? How will you communicate these to the project staff and to others involved, in order to function more effectively as a team? Is the project primarily preventive? rehabilitative? both? Will it have a lasting impact on the community?

- ☐ **Community Partners.** Are there other agencies, businesses, or organizations that share your project's goals and objectives? How will you contact them? What might they offer? How will you involve them in operations and evaluation?

- ☐ **Project Participants.** Whom are you going to serve? How has the need for this project been established? What evidence do you have that they want it? What ages of youth will participate, and how will you find them?

- ☐ **Artistic Discipline.** What art forms will be taught? Will you combine art forms? How will residencies be designed, and by whom? Will residencies be collaborative efforts? How will students' best interests be represented?

- ☐ **Artist Selection.** Who will teach this class? How will you find this person? Who will select the artist? Will you interview, or just view résumés and work?

- ☐ **Length of Project or Residency.** How long will your project last? Two weeks? One month? three? six? nine? How is this determined? What is your long-term plan?

- ☐ **Project Timeline.** What is your timeline for implementing this project? What factors will you need to figure in (e.g., fundraising, artist selection, hiring project staff, student registration)?

- ☐ **Funding Logistics.** What resources will be needed? What are the potential funding sources? Who will be responsible for soliciting them?

- ☐ **Project Evaluation.** Ask yourself up front: What is it you're trying to do and how will you know you've done it? How will you evaluate? Who will do this, and when? How will the information be reported or presented?

Running the Project

- ☐ **Project Administration.** Who will administer the project? What skills, personal qualities, and/or experience would this person need? What are the duties? How many hours per week will this person work? At what rate?

- ☐ **Project Implementation.** Will the artist work alone, or will there be an assistant? What duties will the assistant perform? What skills will this person require, and how many hours per week will it take? What fees would be necessary?

- ☐ **Project Site.** Will you offer classes in a community setting, or will you bring the class into a pre-existing group (shelter home, juvenile detention center)? How will these sites be identified? Is there a cost for this space, or can it be donated? What are the environmental needs for differing art forms? Will you have storage facilities on site, or will you need to carry supplies in daily? What equipment is for your use?

- ☐ **Transportation.** How will students get to class and home afterward? Will students come directly from school or from home? What are the transportation options in your town/city? What are the costs for these options? Can any be donated?

- ☐ **Parent Involvement.** What involvement, if any, will parents have in this residency/project? What is the purpose of this involvement? If participation is desired, what will be done to help ensure this?

- ☐ **Project Enrollment.** How will students sign up for the class? Will you have registration forms? Will students be referred to the project? By whom? How will you interest students who may have limited prior experience in the arts? How will you get the word out about this class?

- ☐ **Community Outreach.** Is there a community outreach component to your residency/project (performance, art show, display)? What purpose would this serve (student recognition, project publicity)? Who will be in charge of arranging these details? What costs will be involved?

- ☐ **Class Logistics.** How long will each class period last? What days of the week will classes be held? How many students in each class? If more than one class will be conducted, will classes be separated by age? Will snacks be provided to students? Can snacks be donated?

- ☐ **Classroom Management.** Do you perceive a need for establishing behavioral guidelines for the classroom? If so, what are the consequences for noncompliance? Who will establish and enforce these guidelines?

- ☐ **Institutional Residencies.** If you bring your project into an institution, such as a juvenile detention center or a group home, what system will you establish to communicate project goals/objectives, classroom management issues, and scheduling with the staff? How will you obtain information from the staff about the student population and their issues? What will be the staff's role? What are your expectations of them, and theirs of you? What guidelines do they enforce that you should know about?

- ☐ **Residency Materials.** What materials/supplies will be needed for the project (art supplies, equipment rental)? What is the cost? Who will obtain these materials? Can any or all of them be donated, or purchased at a discount?

- ☐ **Artist Orientation.** How will you orient the artist to the community? To the students he/she will be working with? To other project staff? To the project site? To institutional staff? When will this happen?

- ☐ **Artist Costs.** What fee will you pay the artist? If it is hourly, does it include planning and prep time? How many hours a week will the artist work? Does this include project staff meetings? What other costs will need to be included (travel, lodging, ground transportation)?

- ☐ **Financial Matters.** How will you pay your bills? Who will do this? What will the payment schedule be for the artist?

- ☐ **Publicity.** What purposes would be served by publicizing the residency/project (potential for future funding, promoting classes to boost student enrollment, educating the public about benefits of including the arts in programs for at-risk youth, recognition for student accomplishments, etc.)? What is your plan for publicizing this project? Who will be responsible for this? When would this occur? What guidelines will you need to establish in order to protect the students, especially if you are working with juvenile offenders? Will you require release forms for students?

- ☐ **Monitoring the Residency/Project.** What methods will be used throughout the project/residency to monitor its success (weekly project staff meetings, mid-residency student evaluations)?

Bridges Over the River of Life

This message was inscribed on five clay tablets, which served as a bridge over the river in the ceramic community of Jacksonville, as a message to youth from an inmate at the Idaho State Correctional Institution.

As a 27 year-old person I want to tell you what I now know. When I was 11 years old I ran away and stole to survive. I've been where you are completely. I need you to know that the road leads only to prison. That's where I am at now. So don't be afraid to be different, to change what is wrong and make your life a special place.

The first time I was caught stealing I was sent to a juvenile prison that was more like a summer camp. The next time I was caught the place was a little bit worse and yet worse still, until at the age of 16 I went to adult prison.

I never cared for myself, all I did was blame the world.
You can do what I did and be a loser or be dead or you
can open your eyes and let cool rest for a while and let life have a shot.

None of you need to come here. I've done it for you already. So do something for me. Never ever believe the lie that drugs or booze is cool. Because if crime is the road to prison, then drugs are the car that gets you there.

I am at a crossroads
I am in high gear
and the parking brake
is on

Maybe I can get unstuck
Once I get out
I can't wait to disappear

Life will be a lot easier
here within the tear
Like a snake shedding its
skin
Who am I going to be this time?

Am I a pioneer in this
world of fear?
I want to go to sleep...

Group poem. Juvenile Justice class
Charlie Murphy's residency

Arts and At-Risk Youth

The Idaho Commission on the Arts invites communities throughout the state of Idaho to continue to learn and discover powerful ways of using artists to work effectively with at-risk youth. We invite your feedback to this publication, as well as your ideas for adapting these concepts to various community settings. As a follow-up to the Family Center Arts Project, the commission is offering training to artists in how to do this work, and grants for longer residencies through the YouthArt and Community Initiative. For more information on working with at-risk youth, examples of artist journals, and project forms, contact the Idaho Commission on the Arts.

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–Jayne Sorrels, Youth at Risk Project Director

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